

CROSSE & BLACKWELL AND THEIR PERFINS

Rosemary Smith.

A long time ago, with the emphasis on 'long', TERENCE BARNES sent in an idea for a display of different ampersands. He then said that it only expanded the illustrations in the front of the Edwards Catalogue and so the idea was left there.

However, Terence had used the perfins of Crosse & Blackwell as part of his display and he sent copies of their advertising literature. This has been in my 'forward file' waiting to be researched. Recently I wrote to Crosse & Blackwell asking if I could copy the short history of their firm from the leaflet, which Terence had given me. (This was from a free offer of a Commemorative Cover and a 50p Stamp Booklet of the 150th Ann. of the 1d Black, from the makers of Branston Pickle Crosse & Blackwell)

The reply was that they did not know of this particular leaflet but would send a history to me. I sent photocopies of the original "Branston Pickle leaflets" and I have now received a great deal of very interesting information from Nestle - who, in 1960, incorporated CSB into their food empire.

There are no records in the Crosse & Blackwell archives about the use of perfins so this article will go to Nestle to be added to their archive material

THE HISTORY OF CROSSE & BLACKWELL

In 1706, during the reign of Queen Anne, WEST & WYATT began trading as 'Oilmen' at No.11 King Street, Soho, London: this is now known as Shaftesbury Avenue. In the next hundred years this firm established a reputation for high class pickles, sauces and condiments, mainly selling to the gentry and nobility.

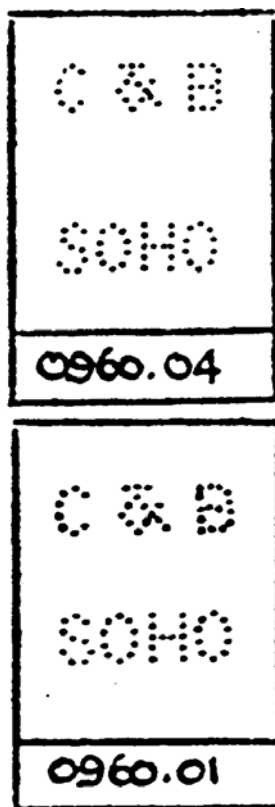
In 1819, two 15 year old boys began their apprenticeship with West and Wyatt. They were EDMUND CROSSE and THOMAS BLACKWELL. They became firm friends and in 1829, when William Wyatt decided to retire, the two young men agreed to purchase the business. On January 26th 1830 the papers were signed and the firm bought for £600. Crosse and Blackwell were in business.

Their energies, ideas and foresight took this well-established old firm to even greater distinction. They sought unique recipes from world famous chefs: quality of ingredients and the finished product was their watchword. In 1839 they moved from the shop and factory in King Street to Soho Square, building a house cum shop at No.21 with which address the name of the company was linked for more than a century. By 1860 the firm had expanded into other food products including canned meats and fish, jams, preserves, soups, crystallized fruits etc.

In 1906 Crosse & Blackwell opened a fish canning factory at Peterhead which is still in production today, turning out the 'Branston' lines. Soups and Beans etc. 1919 saw C&B acquiring Lazenby's Sauce and James Keiller's Dundee Marmalade. In 1922 the BRANSTON pickle made its appearance and in 1960 Crosse & Blackwell joined the Nestle Group.

THE PERFIN OF CROSSE & BLACKWELL

At the present time there are seven perfins which are identified as being used by Crosse & Blackwell and one possible - a wartime provisional. Instead of listing them in catalogue order I will show them in date order - as far as we know.

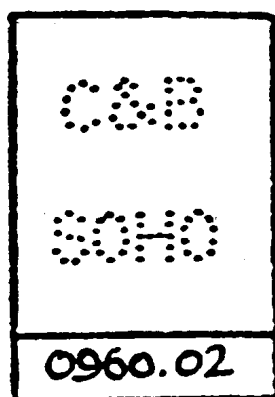


Crosse & Blackwell must have been one of the early users of perfins as a means of preventing the theft of their postage stamps from their offices. ;

C0900.04 - CSB/SOHO - is found on 1d Plates from Nos. 81 to 169. Plate 81 was put to press on 1-3-64 and by the time Sloper was granted permission by the Post Master General, on 13th March 1868, to perforate stamps, Plates 71 to 106 were in print. ;

C0960.01 - CSB/SOHO - is found on later 1d Plates - Nos. 124 to 220. No 124 was put to press on 18-1-69.

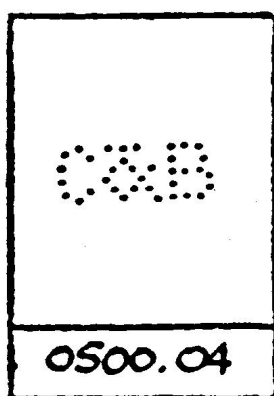
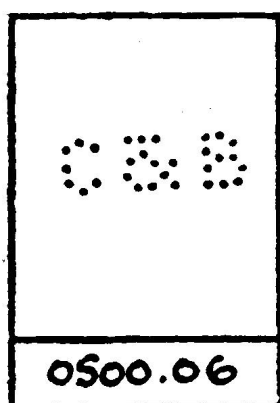
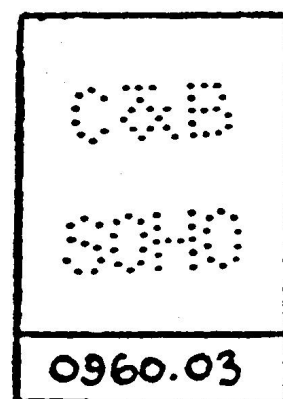
This latter die is also found on issues up to and including the 1d lilac of 1881.



C0960.02 - C&B/SOHO - was the next die to be used. The ampersand has changed to IIIa from I, the 'C&B' are much closer together as are the two lines of letters. This follows the pattern of early perfin letters set to miss the Queen's face (as C0960.04) and later dies having letters closer together.

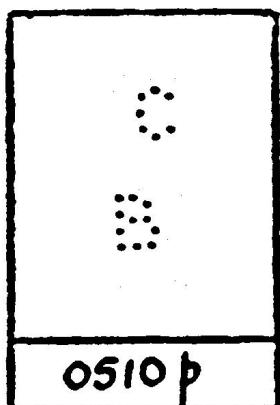
This die is found on the 1d lilac of 1881 through to QV Jubilee issues.

C0960.03 - the last of the C&B/SOHO dies - is found on KEVII to KGV issues. I have a cover dated 1919 with this die and wonder if the date of the change over to just 'C&B' can be pinpointed. 1924-5 seems to be a date of some importance in the history of Crosse & Blackwell as the new Head Office was erected on the site of 20 Soho Square. Perhaps the new perfin was introduced at the new office.



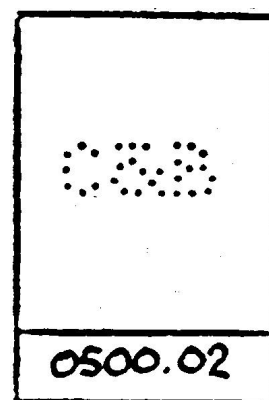
C0500.06 - C&B - is known on stamps of KGV and C0500.04 - C&B - from KGV to KGVII dark colours.

I would be interested to hear of date and issue of these dies.



C0510.01p is a possible Crosse & Blackwell die, used during the Provisional period when Sloper's Works were destroyed in the blitz. Issues of KGVII dark and light colours are known. A positive identification would be useful.

From KGVII light colours to QEII Wilding issues we find the last of



the known Crosse & Blackwell dies - C0500.02M - Again this would fit the history of the firm as they merged with Nestle in 1960.

I have two very interesting early perfin covers from Crosse & Blackwell with die C0960.01 dated 1880 and 1882 respectively. Both have the cachet on the flap "Purveyors By Appointment To The Queen - Crosse & Blackwell - London" printed in a red-brown colour.



Inside the 1880 cover was an itemised bill of goods bought by a grocer in Ryde, Isle of Wight, which makes interesting reading. One item in particular caught my eye: "½ doz. Mushroom Catsup" and written on the reverse of the bill was the message, "In consequence of the failure in the crop of Mushrooms we are unable to supply Catsup in bulk this season". I had to turn to "Mrs Beaton" to find the meaning of 'Catsup'.

Also in this envelope were two price lists dated November 1st 1880. One for "French Crystallised Fruits etc" and the other covered Plum Puddings, Cordials, Salmon, Lobster and many other delicacies. How the other half lived!!

The 1882 cover has a receipt inside which uses a 1d lilac stamp for receipt purposes and it is overprinted in black, 'CROSSE & BLACKWELL'.

Any new or additional information, or photocopies of allied items will be gratefully received and an update published in a future Bulletin.

I thank Terence Barnes for putting this idea in my head in the first place and sending the first bits of information which led on to the rest.

From Nestle UK Ltd I acknowledge the two quite lengthy histories of Crosse & Blackwell and Nestle which were very kindly sent to me by Marion Irving, Senior Public Affairs Officer with the company.

As Nestle have used perfins, I will research these for a later Bulletin.